

Carter House
1140 Columbia Avenue
Franklin
Williamson County
Tennessee

HABS No. TENN-37

HABS
TENN,
94-FRANK,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

ADP-100M
10-1-1

CARTER HOUSE

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Location: 1140 Columbia Avenue, west side of Columbia Avenue between Strahl and Fowlkes Streets, Franklin, Williamson County, Tennessee
Latitude: 35°55'09" Longitude: 86°52'22"

Present Owner: State of Tennessee

Present Occupant: The building is under the care of the Carter House Association

Present Use: Museum

Statement of Significance: This house figured prominently in the Battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864, when it and its outbuildings were a part of the Union line of defense. The house served as the headquarters of Union General Jacob D. Cox. It is a noteworthy example of the smaller, finely detailed houses built in Tennessee during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1830.
2. Architect: No information has come to light concerning the architect or builders.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The house was built for Fountain Branch Carter on nineteen acres of land which he bought from Mr. and Mrs. Angus McPhail in October 1829. The land was part of that which Mrs. McPhail had inherited from her father, Captain Anthony Sharp, who had been awarded the land by the State of North Carolina for his Revolutionary War services. Mr. Carter lived in the house until his death on August 22, 1871. The house then passed by his will to his son, Moscow Branch Carter. In 1896, Carter and his wife deeded the property to S. G. Mullins, who after a few days deeded it to O. E. Daniels. The latter held it until 1910, when it was acquired by Miss Robbie Hunter (later Mrs. Joe L. Ullathorne). At the time of her death, on July 13, 1946, the house passed to her brother, Bennett Hunter, who sold it to the State of Tennessee on July 11, 1951.

4. Original plans and construction: The structure has been restored as close to its original plan and construction as research can determine. The house was the residence on a farm of 288 acres. An outside brick kitchen, the frame farm office, and the large brick smokehouse that were a part of the original plan survive. The barn and corn crib which were some fifty feet to the rear of the house, and a cotton gin which was across the road and to the south of the house, are no longer standing.
5. Alterations and additions: According to Dr. Moscow Carter, grandson of Fountain Branch Carter, the stepped parapets on the north and south gables were torn down to the roof level during remodeling and the stone capping was used to border the front walk. A small porch was built over the front doorway sometime after 1864. (An old photograph [Brandau, p. 285] shows the house minus parapets and with a conspicuous stone border along the brick walk in front of the house. At the time of this photograph, the front porch had not been added.) Later remodeling of the house added dormer windows to the roof, a frame wing on the south, and a porch on the north. Careful restoration has reinstated the stepped parapets and their stone capping and stripped the house of the dormer windows, the small porch over the front doorway, a frame wing on the south, and a porch on the north.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Carter House figured prominently in the Battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864. On the night of November 29, 1864, General John M. Schofield had been able to slip his troops past Confederate General John B. Hood at Spring Hill. It was his plan to reach Nashville, which was in Union hands and a source of supply; on reaching Franklin, however, he found the bridges over the Harpeth River destroyed. Because of the delay which this occasioned and the closeness of the Confederate pursuit, he had to prepare for either a frontal attack or a flanking movement. The defense of the Southern edge of Franklin he left to the command of General Jacob D. Cox with orders to "hold Hood at all hazards until the trains and the rest of the army should be safely across the Harpeth."

General Cox arrived at the Southern outskirts of Franklin at about daybreak on November 30. He woke the Carter family and told them he would have to use their house as temporary headquarters. The house faced the Columbia turnpike and stood on a hill which sloped away to Franklin on the north and to a level stretch on the south which lay between it and Winstead Hill, where the Confederate Army was preparing for attack.

In his reminiscences of the battle, General Cox described the occupants of the Carter House as "Mr. F. B. Carter, an aged gentleman, Col. M. B. Carter, a Confederate officer on parole, four daughters, and a daughter-in-law. Three families of young grandchildren were also in the house, and a couple of female servants, making a household of seventeen souls." (A neighbor family of five also joined the Carters.) Cox pitched headquarters tents in the yard, and they were the point to which communications came.

When Fountain Branch Carter enquired of General Cox what he ought to do, the General advised him not to leave the house "unless it should become certain that a battle was imminent." Neither Mr. Carter nor the General thought Hood would charge across a wide open field toward the Union entrenchments in the Carter yard. The harrowing experience of the Carter family is best described by Colonel Moscow B. Carter, the elder son, a paroled prisoner of war who happened to be at home at the time:

"While the preparations for the impending battle were going on the Carter family were not inattentive observers. They had witnessed on other occasions sharp skirmishes between Rebel cavalry raiders and the Federal pickets stationed about the premises in which men were killed and wounded, some in the yard, and even in the house itself. They felt somewhat inured to the casualties of war but the great number of men now so hurriedly and intently engaged in demolishing houses and constructing works of defence looked to them painfully ominous. The scene presented was on a bigger scale than anything they had ever seen before. It created a feeling of profound anxiety. Whether to abandon home and the little that was left to them after three years and more of devastation, and to seek personal safety by flight, was the all-absorbing thought.

"In either aspect the prospect was discouraging. To leave home, pillage was almost certain, and blackened ruins might be all that would be left to greet their return. With one accord it was determined to remain: perhaps their presence would be respected and the house spared. They would trust God to shield themselves from harm.

"Although Hood was said to be a rash fighter, it was hardly thought he would be reckless enough to make a determined assault on the formidable works in front of him; but to be prepared for any emergency, it was directed that a bundle of clothing projected to the strength of each one be prepared, for the twofold purpose of having that much saved in case all else were lost, and for partial protection should they be forced to leave the house. If the latter became

necessary, all were instructed to throw their respective bundles over their backs, and follow the leader whithersoever he led.

"In a little while all doubts were solved as to Hood's intentions. His solid lines, to the right, to the left, and in front, advancing at a rapid pace, showed plainly enough that the crash was at hand. Although the house had withstood the shock of former conflicts, they seemed as child's play to the approaching storm. The cellar afforded the securest retreat, and hardly was it reached before the din of battle grew appalling. In the gloom of the cellar the children cowered at the feet of their parents, and while the bullets rained against the house and a cannon ball went crashing through, all seemed in a state of acute expectancy, but gave no audible sign of fear.

"The first onset having passed and no one harmed, reassurance returned, and hope revived with some; with others the comparative lull increased the tension and awakened fears of unknown dangers yet to come. In this state of alternating hope and fear, they dragged through the weary hours until the last shot was fired and deliverance assured."

A poignant event of the battle regarding one of the Carter sons, Captain Theodoric (Tod) Carter is related in the words of his father:

"A Confederate soldier brought the sad tidings that Captain Theodoric Carter, a son and brother, lay wounded on the field. An elder brother (Colonel Moscow B. Carter) went immediately in search, but by misdirection went to another part of the field. In the meantime, General Thomas B. Smith, of whose staff young Carter was a member, reported the casualty and led the way, followed by the father, three sisters and sister-in-law, to where the young officer lay, mortally wounded. They lifted him gently and bore him back to die in the home he had not seen for two years or more. He had fallen where his heart's wish was almost attained, only a few rods distant from the home of a lifetime."

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: A drawing showing the gin with the south end of the Carter House was published as "A View of the Battle Field of Franklin" in The Field Book of the Civil War. It is reproduced in Huddleston, page 110.

A photograph, possibly around 1900, showing the house minus the stripped gables.

A photograph in Brandau, page 285.

A photograph, 1949, showing porch and dormer windows.
The Nashville Tennessean Magazine, September 18, 1949,
p. 32.

2. Bibliography:

Brandau, Roberta Seawell. History of Homes and Gardens
of Tennessee. Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1936.

Davis, Louise. "House on a Haunted Hillside." The
/Nashville/ Tennessean Sunday Magazine. September
18, 1949, pp. 30-32.

Horn, Stanley F. Tennessee's War 1861-65. Nashville:
Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 1965,
pp. 304-319.

Huddleston, Ed. The Civil War in Middle Tennessee.
Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1965, pp. 106-114.

Prepared by John W. Kiser
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
Summer 1971

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This one-and-a-half-story brick building with single-story frame ell is a noteworthy example of the smaller, finely detailed houses built in Tennessee during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main block is a one-and-a-half-story brick masonry structure which measures 53'-3" (three-bay front) x 22'-2". The attached single-story wooden frame ell measures 30'-4" x 18'-4".
2. Foundations: Tennessee limestone.

3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The main section is constructed of natural brick, with Flemish bond on the east side and common bond on the other exterior masonry walls. On the north and south sides, the stepped gable ends rest on stone corbeling and are capped with stone. The west wing is of frame construction, finished on the exterior with wooden clapboards.
4. Structural system, framing: The bearing walls are brick. Hand-hewn floor joists are 10 to 12 inches deep, and 2- $\frac{1}{4}$ " to 5- $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide, at approximately 21" on center.
5. Porches: On the southwest a covered L-shaped portico with eight square columns and a cedar floor connects the brick section and the frame ell. Lattice-work in-fill between the supporting piers conceals the area beneath the porch.
6. Chimneys: There are three chimneys, all constructed of brick. The chimney located at each gable end of the main structure projects one stretcher from the wall. The third chimney is located outside the wall on the west end of the frame ell.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is on the east facade. It is an arched opening with double wooden doors, an elliptical sunburst fanlight, and sidelights. Above the opening there is an elliptical wooden hood mold. Each door leaf measures 7'-10" x 2'-0" and has one vertical and three horizontal moulded panels. Two fluted colonnettes separate the doors from the sidelights. Four doors open onto the L-shaped portico on the rear--two six-panel wooden doors from the main section; two board-and-batten-type doors from the ell, one of the latter having six glass lights in the upper section.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Main block--on each side of the east (main) entrance is a three-part window consisting of a central section with six-over-six-light, double-hung wooden sash, and two side sections with two-over-two-light, double-hung sash--the latter separated from the central section by two fluted colonnettes supporting a decorative carved cornice with triangular pediment. On each gable end there is at the first level, to the right of the chimney, a window with nine-over-nine-light, double-hung wooden sash and stone lintel above; at the upper level, two eight-light wooden casement windows flank the

chimney; at the basement level there are two three-light windows. Ell--on the north side of the frame ell are two windows with nine-over-nine-light, double-hung wooden sash; on the south side, a window with six-over-six-light, double-hung wooden sash opens onto the porch.

8. Roof: The main house has a simple pitched roof with stepped gable ends; the frame ell, a simple pitched roof with a gable on the west end. The L-shaped portico is covered in part by a shed roof extending from the west wall of the brick house and in part by an extension of the ell roof. The roofs are covered with asbestos shingles.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The main block consists of a central hallway with a door on the right opening into the parlor, a door on the left opening into a bed-sitting-room, and a door at the rear opening onto the porch. A stairway against the right wall of the hall rises to the second floor, where there is a bedroom on each side of the center stairhall. The two rooms of the single-story ell are accessible only from the porch. A full basement under the masonry section of the house is approached by outside stairs located on the porch. Under the frame ell there is a crawl space only.
2. Stairways: The main stair is an open-well, open-string, half-turn stair with landing, ascending in two runs to the second floor. It has a molded handrail of dark wood and turned balusters painted white. There are ornamental stringer brackets. Six balusters on the bottom step support the handrail as it curves to terminate in a knob.
3. Flooring: The flooring is random-width ash and yellow poplar.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Paper on plaster with a wainscot board 34 inches from the floor.
5. Doorways and doors: The principal interior doors are wooden Christian doors 39" wide and 6'-6" high, having six recessed panels.
6. Mechanical equipment: The house has modern lighting and no plumbing.

7. Heating: In the main block there are two fireplaces at each level--first floor, second floor, and basement. There is one fireplace in the ell.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Carter House faces east onto Columbia Avenue, on a level site between Strahl and Fowlkes Streets.
2. Outbuildings: The frame office and the brick smoke-house are near the southwest corner of the house. The brick kitchen is due west of the house.
3. Landscaping: The building is surrounded by lawns; there are shrubs at the foundations and many trees on the grounds. A brick walk edged by low plantings approaches the steps to the front entrance.

Prepared by Roy C. Pledger
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
July 1971

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the summer of 1971 as part of a cooperative project of the National Park Service, the Tennessee Historical Commission, and the Historic Sites Federation of Tennessee. The work represented the second phase of an extensive recording program to document the historic architecture of Middle Tennessee and involved the recording of structures in the counties surrounding Nashville.

The project was under the direction of James C. Massey, at that time Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Supervisor of the recording team was Prof. Roy C. Pledger of Texas A&M University. The team was composed of John W. Kiser, Architectural Historian (University of Tennessee); Daryl P. Fortier, Architect (University of Minnesota); and student architects Gilbert M. Glaubinger (Rhode Island School of Design), Steve P. Roberts (Ohio State University), and Barry S. Williams (Texas A&M University). Photographs were made by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer.

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWING

Addendum to:

Carter House
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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